



Discretionary Housing
Payment Scheme (DHP)

Policy and Guidance
September 2020

Table of Contents

SECTION	CONTENTS	PAGE
1	Legislation	4
2	Background	4
3	Revenues and Customer Services Section Team Policy	7
4	Statement of Objectives	7
5	Claiming a DHP	8
6	Awarding a DHP	9
7	Changes of Circumstances	12
8	Method of Payment	12
9	Notification	13
10	Refused DHP	13
11	The Right to Seek a Review	13
12	Overpayments	14
13	Publicity	14
14	Fraud	14
15	Money Spent and Monitoring	14
Annex A	Maximum allowable expenditure	16
Annex B	Application form	17

Change History

Version	Date	Author	Details of change
V1	16/01/14	Jim Glover	Initial draft
V2	27/01/14	Jim Glover	Minor amendments
V3	10/02/14	Jim Glover	Period of awards
V4	15/10/2015	Craig Scott	Annex A – Review / update
V5	February 2016	Craig Scott	Policy Review / Update
V6	January 2017	Craig Scott	Annex A – Review/ Update – Re-Branding
V7	January 2019	Craig Scott	Annex A - Review
V8	February 2020	Craig Scott	Policy & Annex A – now v8.1 (amended Sep 2020)

Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme (DHP)

1. LEGISLATION

Primary Legislation: The Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000.

Regulations: Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001.

2. BACKGROUND

In July 2001, a new scheme was introduced which granted all Local Authorities new powers to award a top up payment to the Housing and Council Tax Benefit statutory schemes.

Following the abolition of Council Tax Benefit from April 2013, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) can no longer be made towards Council Tax Liability. A customer who is receiving Council Tax Support, with no rental liability (e.g. an owner occupier) is not eligible to apply for a DHP.

The DHP scheme from April 2013 will now only cover shortfalls in housing costs. Every claimant who is entitled to the minimum amount of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and who has a shortfall is entitled to make a claim for help. The purpose of the scheme is to provide additional funds to benefit recipients who are suffering from financial hardship and are unable to meet their housing costs.

Housing costs are not defined in the regulations and this gives Ashfield District Council a broad discretion to interpret the term as they wish. In general, housing costs means rental liability.

The main objectives of Ashfield District Council's Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Scheme reflect the objectives outlined in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) guidance for Local Authorities and Brent's Corporate Strategy. The main objectives are aimed at:-

- Preventing homelessness
- Keeping families together
- Supporting the vulnerable and elderly in sustaining tenancies
- Enabling people to secure new sustainable tenancies
- Providing financial respite for people in short-term difficulty
- Incentivising people into and maintaining work
- Supporting people in education

The main features of the scheme are:

- The scheme is purely discretionary; a claimant does not have a statutory right to a payment.

- The amount that can be paid out by an Authority in any financial year is cash-limited by the Secretary of State.
- The administration of the scheme is for the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Department to determine.
- DHP's are not a payment of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. However, the minimum amount of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit must be in payment in the benefit week that a DHP is awarded for.

DHP's can be provided for:

- Rent officer restrictions such as Local Reference Rents (LRR), Single Room Rent (SRR) size criteria or when the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) does not meet the rent.
- Reductions in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit entitlement following changes to the LHA rates.
- Non-dependant deductions.
- Income tapers.
- Prevention of loss of tenancy due to hardship - consideration can be given to backdating of the award if customer has demonstrated good cause. This will require evidence to be provided by the tenant where necessary
- Help to secure a new sustainable tenancy

Securing new sustainable tenancies

The intention of this category is to provide awards (normally one-off) to enable people to secure new sustainable tenancies either in or out of the Ashfield District. Awards would only be considered where at present the Housing Benefit payable does not cover the individual's liability for reasons such as under occupancy.

The awards within this category are made up as follows:

- Removal costs: The reasonable costs of moving to a more suitable sized accommodation can be met by a DHP Payment. Removal costs would be paid to the customer following proof of removal costs by way of receipt or invoice.
- Deposits: Deposits paid in order to help individual's secure new sustainable tenancies. This would be a maximum of 1 months' rent and would only be payable if this payment enabled the tenant to move to sustainable accommodation (correct number of bedrooms for household composition).
- Rent in advance: Some tenancies require 1 months' rent in advance (sometimes 4 weeks rent) on top of a deposit. A maximum of 1 months' rent in advance could be paid by DHP in order to help an individual secure new sustainable tenancy in a smaller property (correct number of bedrooms for household composition).

Rent deposits and rent upfront will be paid as a lump sum directly to the new Landlord / Agent.

In exceptional circumstances payment of DHP for rent deposits and rent in advance can be made even where it has not been possible for the tenant to move into the most affordable accommodation, for example, when someone is fleeing their home due to domestic violence and needs to seek a place of safety such as a refuge.

On two homes:

The regulations permit a person to receive help through a DHP award for the rent due on a property they have moved into when treated as temporarily absent from their home where the claimant has moved due to domestic violence. If the customer is liable for the rent on both properties and in both cases there is a shortfall, a DHP could be awarded in respect of both properties subject to the weekly limit on each property.

- If the claimant is liable for payments on one dwelling but is having to pay rent on two, a weekly DHP could be made to assist with the temporary accommodation up to the level of the weekly eligible rent on the dwelling from which they are temporarily absent.
- Rent shortfalls to prevent a household becoming homeless whilst the Housing Department explores alternative options.
- Foster carers including those between placements.
- Disabled people subject to under-occupancy living in accommodation that has been substantially adapted for their needs.

In addition to the above DHPs can be used to provide support to customers affected by some of the key welfare reforms including:

- Reductions in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit where the benefit cap has been applied.
- Reductions in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit for under-occupation in the social rented sector.
- Reductions in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit as a result of LHA restrictions to the shared room rate for those customers who have not reached 35 years.

DHP's cannot be used for help with:

- Ineligible service charges.
- Increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears
- Shortfalls in Council Tax Support.
- Rent, when the person is getting Council Tax support but not HB or help with housing costs in UC
- Certain sanctions and reductions in benefit.
- Benefit suspensions
- Shortfalls caused by overpayment recovery.

Further guidance can be found in Appendix B of the Department for Work and Pensions Discretionary Housing Payments Guidance Manual (February 2016.)

3. REVENUES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES SECTION POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to specify how Ashfield District Council's Revenues and Customer Services Section will operate the scheme and to indicate some factors that will be considered when deciding if a DHP can be made. Each case will be treated strictly on its merits and all customers will be treated equally and fairly when the scheme is administered. The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section is committed to working with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other interested parties within the district to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits and this will be reflected in the administration of the DHP scheme.

4. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will consider making a payment of a DHP to claimants who meet the qualifying criteria. Before making an award the authority must be satisfied that the customer is entitled to:

- Housing Benefit; or
- Universal Credit; and
- has a rental liability; and
- requires further financial assistance with housing costs.

This policy is not intended to define the specific situations of when we will or will not make a discretionary payment, to do so would make the policy too rigid and may prevent payments being made where there are exceptional or unusual circumstances. Payments are expected to be made to meet current needs rather than past debts.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section has built up expertise and local knowledge which enables the authority to profile their DHP budget to meet demand over the course of the year. Following welfare reform changes it is predicted that demand is going to significantly increase and therefore, the Council will need to continue to review its DHP fund.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will see through the operation of this policy to:

- Alleviate poverty.
- Encourage and sustain the Authorities residents in employment.
- Help those who are trying to help themselves.
- Keep families together.
- Prevent child poverty.
- Support the vulnerable in the local community.
- Help customers through a personal crisis / difficult event.
- Support households that are returning to work after a period of unemployment and provide assistance in the managing of their finances

during the transition from coming off benefit and receiving wages and securing Working Tax Credit entitlement.

- Support those who are in affordable housing but at risk of becoming homeless due to being unable to meet their full rent liability due to severe financial difficulties from the effects of the current economic climate.
- To support foster carers who have a spare room for a potential foster child
- To consider disabled people living in accommodation that has been substantially adapted for their needs.

5. CLAIMING A DHP

A claim for a DHP must be made on an approved form accepted by Ashfield District Council which is shown in Appendix A.

On request or in appropriate circumstances, the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section issue the claimant with a DHP application form, informing them that the form needs to be returned within one month of its issue. The claimant will be required to return the form to the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section within one month of its issue and will be encouraged to include any relevant supporting evidence.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section may request any reasonable evidence in support of an application for a DHP. The claimant will be asked to provide the evidence within one month of such a request, although this will be extended in appropriate circumstances. Sufficient evidence will need to be obtained to enable the decision maker to compare income against expenses to identify where there is a shortfall.

If the claimant is unable to or does not provide the required evidence, the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will still consider the application and will in any event take into account any other available evidence including that held on the Housing Benefit file. The department reserves the right to verify any information or evidence provided by the claimant in appropriate circumstances.

Period of Award

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section considers that the DHP scheme should be seen as a short term fund to assist financial hardship. It is not and should not be considered as a way around any current or future entitlement reductions set out within legislation. In all cases, the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will decide the length of time for which a DHP will be awarded on the basis of the evidence supplied and the facts known.

The start date of an award will normally be:

- i. The Monday after the written claim form for a DHP is received or initial request made to the Benefits Department; or

- ii. The date on which entitlement to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit commenced (providing the DHP application form is received within one calendar month of the claim for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit being decided), whichever is the most appropriate.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section cannot award a DHP for any period outside an existing Housing Benefit or Universal Credit period granted under the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit statutory schemes.

- The minimum period for which the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will award a DHP is one week.
- The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will usually award a DHP for not less than 13 weeks.
- The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will not normally award a DHP for a period exceeding 39 weeks.
- The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will consider any reasonable request for backdating an award of a DHP but such consideration will usually be limited to the current financial year.

Backdating a DHP

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will look at each claim on its own merits when deciding whether or not to backdate a DHP claim. Unlike Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, there are no rules on backdating, but the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will act consistently when considering requests for backdating.

6. AWARDING A DHP

All applications will be considered by a Revenues and Benefits Officer in the first instance and generally based on the household income and expenditure.

Essentially the Council will compare the household income and expenditure to see whether the customer is in need of further financial assistance to meet their housing costs. Each decision reached is “discretionary” and is not governed by strict regulations, although the Council will ensure that all decisions made are impartial and reasonable.

Please note that the regulations regarding the treatment of income in Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claims do not apply in the DHP decision making process. Therefore, we may decide to count income into a DHP calculation that might have disregarded in the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit assessment e.g. Child Benefit, Maintenance Payments and Disability Allowance received by any member of the household. (As any additional expenditure associated with their disability will have been taken into account in their outgoings).

Similarly we can use our discretion when determining if the expenses are reasonable and we have established maximum allowable amounts of expenditure that are dependent on household composition. Details of these amounts are shown in Annex B, any decisions made about a person’s expenditure will be done on an individual basis and may require some additional clarification

In deciding whether to award a DHP, the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will take into account:

- The shortfall between Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and the rental liability.
- Any steps taken by the claimant to reduce their rental liability.
- The medical circumstance of the claimant; their partner and any dependents and any other occupants of the same household. Disability related benefits are intended to be used to help pay for the extra costs of disability; and as such money might already be committed to other liability such as a Mobility schemes, provision of care etc.
- The income and expenditure of the claimant, their partner and any dependents or other occupants of the claimant's home.
- Any savings or capital that might be held by the claimant or their family.
- The level of indebtedness of the claimant and their family's circumstances.
- The amount available in the DHP budget at the time of the application.
- The possible impact on the Council of not making such an award, e.g. pressure on priority homeless accommodation.
- Any other special circumstances brought to the attention of the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section.

Capital

Where the customer holds capital, the officer must use their discretion to decide whether the level of capital warrants refusing the customer's DHP application. The authority does not normally award a DHP if the customer has more than £1,000.00 in savings. However, consideration should be given to the fact that the capital may be reserved for a reasonable future expense, such as a bond or rent in advance in respect of cheaper accommodation.

Turning down affordable accommodation

Under normal circumstances, where a customer has previously refused the allocation of more suitable affordable accommodation, a DHP will not be paid.

Expenditure

When considering expenditure the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will take into account 'expenditure of luxury items'. These items should be considered on an individual case basis, the customer may not be able to dispose of a luxury item quickly, or they may have good reason for requiring the item. However, where an item is clearly unnecessary we should not include the item as part of the customer's expenditure.

For example: If the customer has SKY TV they may be tied to a 12 month contract for the package, but could easily cancel any additional channels immediately. If this is possible, but they simply refuse to do this (with no good reason) we will consider a DHP reduction for the additional channels.

When awarding a DHP to assist the customer with securing a new tenancy, the authority will consider the following:

- The authority will include information about the legal obligations for landlords to protect any deposit paid in a Government approved tenancy deposit protection scheme. Compliance with this requirement will help reduce the need for future help with deposits.
- Establishing if the customer is due to have a deposit in respect of their exiting tenancy returned to them.
- Making payment to the landlord rather than the customer where applicable.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will decide how much to award based on all of the customer's circumstances. This may be an amount below the difference between the rent liability and the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing payment. An award of a DHP does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date, even if the claimant's circumstances have not changed.

Given the number of people who are or will be affected by Welfare Reform Changes, awarding DHPs to meet all shortfalls is a viable option. Careful consideration will therefore be required to determine how best to target the funding to priority groups, whilst ensuring that each case is considered on its own merits.

- Families with children at a critical point in their education.
- Young people leaving local authority care.
- Foster carers, including those between placements: foster children are not included in the Housing Benefit assessment but neither is the income from foster allowances; as the Government values the work done by foster carers. Whilst some carers may be able to make up the shortfall using some of their allowance, or by other means, some thought should be given to supporting foster carers who are deemed to be under-occupying their accommodation because they have rooms occupied by foster children, or being kept available for future placements. The Council should bear in mind that foster carers should not be financially penalised because of their foster caring role.
- People going through the approval process to become foster carers who may need to show that they have a spare room to be approved. If a DHP was awarded on this basis, it would be up to the claimant to inform the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section of a change of circumstances if, for example, they were not subsequently approved.
- Families with kinship care arrangements. Children who go into the care of family and friends are often extremely vulnerable and will usually benefit from the stability of remaining in a familiar area and continuing to attend their local school.
- Families with a child temporarily in care but who is expected to return home.
- What constitutes temporary will be at the authority's discretion.
- Families with a social services intervention, for example highly dependent adults, children at risk or involvement in a family intervention project.
- People who have had to flee domestic violence or have moved because of the threat of violence in another area.
- Where someone in the household is expecting a baby (including those currently in shared accommodation or subject to an under-occupation reduction).

- Ex-homeless people being supported to settle in the community.
- People with health or medical problems who need access to local medical services or support that might not be available elsewhere.
- People with disabilities who need, or have had, significant adaptations made to their property, or where they are living in a property particularly suited to their needs.
- Where the claimant or someone in the household has a disability which requires them to have a larger property than would usually be the case for the size of their household due to, for example, a medical condition or where a child has a particular disability that might mean they are unable to share a bedroom.
- People with disabilities who receive informal care and support in their current neighbourhood from family and friends which would not be available in a new area. In this respect the authority may also consider families who have a child with a disability who rely heavily on local support networks.
- Households with disabled children who require an overnight carer.
- The elderly who have lived in the area for a long period of time and would find it difficult to establish support networks in a new area.
- People who need to live near their jobs because they work unsocial hours or split shifts; or where moving home may mean living in an area where public transport would be inadequate to enable them to sustain their current job.

7. CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will need to revise an award of a DHP where the claimant's circumstances have materially changed.

8. METHOD OF PAYMENT

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will decide the most appropriate person to pay based upon the circumstances of each case. This could include paying:

- The claimant.
- Their partner.
- An appointee.
- Their landlord (or an agent of the landlord).
- Any third party to whom it might be most appropriate to make payment.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will pay an award of DHP by the most appropriate means available in each case.

- By electronic transfer (e.g. BACS).
- By crediting the claimant's rent account if renting from the Council.

Payment frequency will normally be made in line with how the customer's Housing Benefit or Universal Credit is paid to them. Weekly payments would only apply where Universal Credit payments are paid directly to a Council Tenant's rent account under a managed rent payment arrangement.

9. NOTIFICATION

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will inform the claimant of the outcome of their application within 14 days of receipt of all of the information being received. Where the application is unsuccessful, the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will set out the reasons why this decision was made and explain the right of review. Where the application is successful, the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will advise:

- The weekly amount of DHP awarded.
- The period of the award.
- How, when to whom the award will be paid.
- The requirement to report a change in circumstances.

Where customers have been identified as struggling to manage their financial affairs, they will be signposted to the Citizens Advice Bureau for independent advice. Where customers are experiencing a shortfall in their housing costs due to restrictions implemented as part of the welfare reforms and associated with their accommodation, their details will be passed to Ashfield District Council's Housing Service. They will be able to provide further advice and possibly be able to help the customer find a more suitable place to live or assist the customer in keeping their current home.

10. REFUSED DHP

Where a request for payments has been refused, it is not expected that repeat requests will be considered unless the customer can demonstrate that their situation has worsened significantly or a substantial period of time has elapsed.

11. THE RIGHT TO SEEK A REVIEW

DHPs are not payments of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and therefore are not subject to the statutory appeals mechanism.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will operate the following process for dealing with a decision about a refusal to award a DHP, a decision to award a reduced amount of DHP, a decision not to backdate a DHP or a decision that there has been an overpayment of a DHP.

- A claimant (or their appointee) who disagrees with a DHP decision may dispute the decision. A request must be made in writing to the Revenues and Benefits Section within one calendar month of the written decision about the DHP being issued to the claimant.
- The Senior Revenues Officer – Benefits will then review the decision and all of the evidence held and revise the decision if appropriate. If the decision is not revised then they will make a recommendation to the Service Director - Resources and Business Transformation and provide all appropriate information surrounding the recommendation.
- The case will be reviewed by the Service Director - Resources and Business Transformation and the Portfolio member responsible for the

service. If the recommendation is accepted to refuse the award of DHP the Senior Revenues Officer – Benefits will notify the claimant of their decision in writing, setting out the reasons for their decision.

- This decision is final and binding and may only be challenged via the judicial review process or by complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if there is an allegation of maladministration.
- In exceptional circumstances the above time period may be extended.

12. OVERPAID DHP's

DHPs may be recovered either fraudulently or otherwise. A DHP is also recoverable if it was paid as a result of an error made when the claim was determined.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section cannot recover DHPs from ongoing Housing Benefit or Universal Credit entitlement. Therefore, the only method of recovery if a DHP is overpaid is to request repayment of the debt from the customer by invoice.

13. PUBLICITY

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section will continue to publicise the scheme and will work with all interested parties to achieve this. DHPs will continue to be promoted through leaflets, the Council's website and all benefit letters. Staff are trained and knowledgeable and will advise those who are considered to be in financial difficulty of the availability of these payments.

14. FRAUD

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. A claimant who tried to fraudulently claim a DHP by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under the Theft Act 1968. Where the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Section suspects that such a fraud may have occurred, the matter will be investigated as appropriate and this may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

15. MONEY SPENT AND MONITORING

The Government provides a contribution to the Local Authority each year and the Authority can add an additional 2.5 times the Government contribution to the fund. This is the permitted amount that can be spent on discretionary payments. Once the overall cash limit has been met, no further DHPs can be awarded, any funds paid out above this limit will have resulted in breaking the law.

The legislation which specifies the overall limit on expenditure is Article 7 of The Discretionary Housing Payment (Grants) Order 2001.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have announced that their

contributions to the DHP fund will be continue to be increased to assist with the welfare reform changes. As a result of this increased funding DWP are required to monitor how DHPs are being used to support customers affected.

Ashfield District Council will be required to provide a broad breakdown of their expenditure. Following a successful application for DHPs, the authority should record the main reason for the award, as detailed below:

- To support customer affected by benefit cap.
- To support customer affected by social sector size criteria.
- To support customer affected by LHA reforms.
- Any other reason (covers original funding).

The Council will normally set the annual DHP budget in line with the allocated level of spend from the DWP which attracts subsidy. The Council will consider increasing this budget in the light of economic circumstances and evidence on demand.

Appendix A**Ashfield District Council Maximum Allowable expenditure for DHP applications ***

	first adult		additional adults		child under 16		child 16 - 18	
Rent	£200.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Rent - arrears	£100.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Council Tax	£50.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Council Tax - arrears	£100.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Gas & Electricity	£40.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£10.00	£0.00	£10.00	£0.00
Other household fuel (Oil/Coal etc)	£10.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Water	£8.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Telephone (landline)	£5.00	£0.00	£2.50	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Telephone (mobile)	£10.00	£0.00	£5.00	£0.00	£5.00	£0.00	£5.00	£0.00
Internet	£7.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2.00	£0.00	£2.00	£0.00
TV & satellite costs	£8.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
TV Licence (£157.50 P/Y)	£3.05	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
House Insurance	£6.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Travel costs (bus, train, tram, taxis)	£30.00	£0.00	£5.00	£0.00	£5.00	£0.00	£5.00	£0.00
Insurance premium - car	£15.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Car Tax	£4.50	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Car maintenance/MOT	£5.00	£0.00	£5.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Petrol	£20.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Maintenance/Child Support payments	£8.00	£0.00	£8.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Health/Medical	£4.50	£0.00	£4.50	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Personal Insurance	£6.00	£0.00	£6.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Food Items	£50.00	£0.00	£20.00	£0.00	£15.00	£0.00	£15.00	£0.00
Household Items (toiletries/cleaning)	£4.00	£0.00	£4.00	£0.00	£2.50	£0.00	£2.50	£0.00
Clothing	£6.00	£0.00	£6.00	£0.00	£6.00	£0.00	£6.00	£0.00
Loans, court orders or fines	£12.00	£0.00	£12.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Credit Cards/ Shop account	£50.00	£0.00	£13.00	£0.00	£1.00	£0.00	£1.00	£0.00
Catalogues/store cards	£10.00	£0.00	£5.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
School Meals	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£15.00	£0.00	£15.00	£0.00
Child Minding fees	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£10.00	£0.00	£10.00	£0.00
Other	£50.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

* The maximum limits reviewed - February 2020.

Appendix B**APPLICATION FOR A DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT**

Claim No.

Please answer all the questions in full

Title:	Mr/Mrs/Miss/Miss
Your Surname	
All Other Names	
Your Date of Birth	
National Insurance (NI) Number	
Address	
Postcode	
Daytime Phone Number	
Landlord name and address	
Date you moved in to this property	
1. For what reason are you claiming Discretionary Hardship Payments? Please tick those that apply: Moving costs (invoice required) Deposit (proof of amount required from landlord) Rent in advance (proof of amount required from landlord, maximum payable 4 weeks/ 1 month) Shortfall in rent	
2. Why did you leave your last address?	
3. How did you find out about your present home?	
4. If you are a private tenant, have you tried to negotiate with the landlord to lower the rent? YES / NO If YES, please enclose proof that the landlord refuses to lower the rent	

<p>5. If you are a private tenant, is there a risk you will be evicted if you cannot pay the shortfall? YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, please provide proof.</p>	
<p>6. Do you have any income that you could use to top up your rent payments? YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, how much could you pay towards the shortfall? £_____ a week / a month</p>	
<p>7. Are all members of your household in good health? YES / NO</p> <p>If NO, please give details, and enclose supporting medical evidence:</p>	
<p>8. Has the property been adapted in any way? YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p>	
<p>9. Do you have any family living locally who could give you help or financial support? YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p>	
<p>10. Do you have any assets in the form of property or belongings that you could sell to help you pay your rent? YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p>	
<p>11. Could you move if you were not able to pay your rent? YES / NO</p> <p>If NO, please say why not:</p>	

12. Have you tried to find somewhere else to live that is cheaper than your current property?
YES / NO

If YES, please give details of any accommodation you have found, when you found it and why you were not able to move:

13. Please confirm the number of bedrooms in your current property?

14. Please list below full names and dates of birth of all residents in your property. We also need to know the relationship between yourself and any other residents and what income they receive.

Name	Date of birth	Relationship	Income

15. Please fill in the financial statement below

Outgoings	Weekly	Monthly	Any Arrears You Owe
Rent * We must see up to date proof of the amount of rent you pay.			
Rent – arrears payments			
Council Tax			
Council Tax – arrears payments			
Electricity			
Gas			
Other household fuel (oil / coal etc)			
Water			
Telephone (land line)			
Telephone (Mobile)			
Internet			
Television and Satellite costs			
Television Licence			
House Insurance			
Travel costs (bus, trains, taxis)			
Insurance Premiums - Car			
Car Tax			
Car Maintenance / MOT			
Petrol			
Maintenance / Child Support Payments			
Health / Medical (Insurance / optical / dental / prescription charges)			
Personal Insurance			
	Weekly	Monthly	Any Arrears You Owe
Food Items			
Household Items (toiletries etc)			
Clothing			
Loans, court orders or fines (please give details)			
Catalogues / Store Cards			
School Meals			
Child Minding Fees			
Any others (please give details)			
Income Details	Weekly	Monthly	
Wages or salary of the claimant			
Wages or salary of the partner			

Working Tax Credits		
Child Tax Credits		
Child Benefit		
Disabled Person's Tax Credits		
Universal Credit (we must see all pages of your award letter)		
Income Support / Job Seekers Allowance / Employment Support Allowance		
Other Benefit (please say which)		
Retirement Pensions		
Other Pensions		
Other Income carers allowance		
16. Please confirm the total money (capital) you hold in all bank / building society accounts.		
17. Do you receive any money from other adults in the household e.g. son or daughter? YES / NO		
If yes, how much do they contribute £ per week / per month		
18. Have you contacted the Citizens Advice Bureau or a similar organisation to check that you have claimed all the benefits you are entitled to? YES / NO		
19. Bank details, these are required for payment of Discretionary benefit if payment is to be made directly to you for the shortfall in rent.		
Account number		
Sort code		
Account name		
20. Rent in advance and deposit payments will be made direct you your landlord, please supply their bank details below.		
Account number		
Sort code		
Account name		
21. Removal costs. These will only be made upon receipt of a valid invoice. We suggest you contact us in advance for advice on payment.		

Proofs required to support your application:

You must supply proof of all the incomes you have listed.

If you are receiving Universal Credit we must see all pages of your Universal Credit award letter, you must also continue to advise us of any changes to your award as they occur.

We must see up to date proof of rent. Please supply your latest tenancy agreement. If you do not have a tenancy agreement please contact us for further advice.

General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) / Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) - Privacy Notice.

Under the GDPR and DPA, Ashfield District Council, Urban Road, Kirkby in Ashfield, Nottingham. NG17 8DA is a Data Controller for the information it holds about you. The Council will hold all personal information provided by you for your application for Discretionary Housing Payments and Council Tax Hardship payments. The lawful basis under which the Council uses personal data for this purpose is Public Task

The information provided by you includes the following special categories of personal data:

- physical or mental health

Special Category Data is used by the Council on the basis that such use is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest, in this instance Schedule 1, Part 2, 6(1), Statutory etc and government purposes in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Your data will be held for 6 years after the end of your claim. Subject to some legal exceptions, you have the right to request a copy of the personal information the Council holds about you; to have any inaccuracies corrected; to have your personal data erased; to place a restriction on our processing of your data; to object to processing; and to request your data to be ported (data portability). The information provided by you may also be used for other functions carried out by the Council in accordance with GDPR and DPA. For more information about how the Council may use your data and to learn more about your rights please see the Council's Privacy Statement www.ashfield.gov.uk/privacy

If you have any concerns or questions about how your personal data is processed, please contact the Council's Data Protection Officer at the above address or by email to dpo@ashfield.gov.uk . If you are dissatisfied with the Council's response you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office in writing to: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF or by telephone 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745.

Declaration:

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, the information given on this form is true and correct. I understand that it is an offence to knowingly make a false declaration. I understand that enquiries may be made to verify the information given and that this may include inspection of the property. If awarded a benefit entitlement, I undertake to inform the benefits team of any change in circumstances affecting the amount of benefit I receive.

Signature:

Date:

If you are at risk of Homelessness please contact our Housing Options Team on 01623 457252

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS: GUIDANCE

Discretionary Housing Payments are payments, which are made in addition to Housing Benefit if we are able to determine that additional help towards the cost of your rent is needed. It is paid from a limited government fund where your current benefit award does not fully cover your rent.

Discretionary Housing Payments are only for helping with short term problems. If you are awarded a payment it will be for a fixed short period of time and should not be considered as a long term solution to your current situation.

There are some conditions that apply in respect of the scheme as follows:

- You must receive Housing Benefit and your circumstances must be such that you need extra financial help with your Housing costs.
- That the amount of Discretionary Housing Payment paid, when added to your Housing Benefit entitlement must not be more than your rent liability. Payment will normally start from the Monday following the day we receive your application.
- You cannot afford to pay the shortfall in rent out of your existing budget.

Discretionary Housing Payments are made at the Council's discretion. There are no rules that give anyone the right to receive a payment and each application will be considered on its own merits. You will need to demonstrate that you do not have the means to pay the shortfall in your rent and that you have not intentionally taken on a tenancy that you knew you could not afford. In order for the award to be considered we may need to ask you for some additional information, which some people may find to be intrusive, however it is important to remember that we will only ask for information that is necessary in order for a decision to be made.

The period of time that an award will be made for will vary depending on the individual circumstances of the person applying, however as previously stated it will only be for a short period of time in order to give you the opportunity to make alternative arrangements to cover the shortfall in your rent.

What do I do if my circumstances change?

You must tell us as soon as possible if your circumstances change. We may need to change an award of Discretionary Housing Payment if your circumstances have changed. If the change means that you have received money you are not entitled to you may be asked to pay it back.

What do I do if I do not agree with your decision?

Discretionary Housing Payments are not part of the Housing Benefit scheme; therefore you have no legal right to appeal.

However, if you disagree with the decision you can write and ask us to look at your application again. You must contact us within one month of the date on the decision letter, giving us the reasons why you disagree. You can also ask for a written statement of reasons, which will show more information about the decision.

**IF REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS ARE NEEDED TO FULLY ENGAGE WITH THE AUTHORITY PLEASE CONTACT
01623 450000**